

# Staying Safe while Practicing Yoga

You might be surprised to learn that every year thousands of people end up in the hospital due to yoga injuries. A few simple steps can help you stay safe, avoid the emergency room, and enjoy a safe yoga practice.

## #1 Start Slowly

If you're new to yoga, be sure to start in a beginner's class. You'll be able to practice the poses without feeling competitive or overwhelmed. If you can afford it, a private instructor can help you learn the poses quickly and their hands on guidance can be invaluable.

## #2 Use Proper Equipment

You'd be surprised how many people practice yoga with the wrong equipment, or no equipment at all. Blocks, straps and yoga mats are all designed to help enhance a yoga practice and aid the movements. They can help you ease into a yoga practice and adapt to the poses as your body changes and grows.

## #3 Wear Good Clothing

Yoga class is not the place for tennis shoes, jeans and a wool sweater. You want to wear clothing that lets your body move freely but isn't baggy. It's too easy to trip over long pant legs! Socks generally aren't worn, unless they're yoga socks which tend to have a sticky bottom that adheres to the floor or a yoga mat.

Slipping on floors is a good way to get hurt. Bare feet work best. And because there are many inverted poses, meaning you're upside down, you'll want to make sure you're wearing a shirt that doesn't flop over your head. Form-fitting tank

tops, cami-tops, or sports bras work best for women. Men may prefer to wear a t-shirt or tank top.

#### #4 Learn from an Expert

Many people prefer to practice yoga in the comfort of their homes. There are many top quality DVDs available and there are online podcasts and videos you can access as well. However, when you're at home, you lose the benefit of an instructor. Consider taking a class or two or hiring a private instructor before you begin your home practice. This way you can ensure you're performing the poses in a safe and correct manner.

#### #5 Listen to Your Body

Many people push their body beyond its limits. The most common injuries are wrist injuries, back injuries and knee and hip injuries. If you're feeling sore, find a way to modify a pose so that your joints or muscles aren't compromised. Remember that some days are better than others and it's important to mentally adapt to your physical changes.